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TELEGRAM

July 06, 2003

To: No Action Addressee
Action: Unknown
From: AMEMBASSY ABU DHABI (ABU DHABI 3146 - PRIORITY)
TAGS: PREL, PGOV
Captions: None
Subject: ZAYID CENTER TO GET MORE OVERSIGHT, NEW MANAGEMENT, TO
STAY IN LINE WITH UAEG POLICY
Ref: None

C O N F I D E N T I A L ABU DHABI 03146

SIPDIS
CXABU:
ACTION: POL
INFO: RSO AMB DCM ECON P/M

DISSEMINATION: POL
CHARGE: PROG

APPROVED: AMB:MMWAHBA
DRAFTED: POL:JFMAYBURY
CLEARED: A/DCM:KVANDEVATE

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FM AMEMBASSY ABU DHABI
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 0711
INFO RUEHEE/ARAB LEAGUE COLLECTIVE PRIORITY
RUCAACC/USCENTCOM MACDILL AFB FL//POLAD/CCJ2/CCJ5// PRIORITY
RUEKJCS/SECDEF WASHDC//OSD/NESA//
RHEHNSC/NSC WASHINGTON DC
RUEAIIA/CIA WASHINGTON DC
RHEFDIA/DIA WASHDC

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 ABU DHABI 003146

SIPDIS

STATE FOR NEA/ARP, NEA/FO, AND NEA/PA

NSC FOR PETER THEROUX

E.O. 12958: DECL: 07/06/13
TAGS: [PREL](#) [PGOV](#) [TC](#)
SUBJECT: ZAYID CENTER TO GET MORE OVERSIGHT, NEW
MANAGEMENT, TO STAY IN LINE WITH UAEG POLICY

REF: A) Abu Dhabi 2895 (161335Z JUN 03)
B) Abu Dhabi 2236
C) 02 Abu Dhabi 4712

[1](#)1. (U) Classified by Ambassador Marcelle M. Wahba
for reasons 1.5 (B) and (D).

[1](#)2. (C) SUMMARY: The controversial Abu Dhabi-based, Arab

League-affiliated and UAEG-funded Zayid Center for Coordination and Follow-Up (ZCCF) will cease temporarily all of its activities this summer, and will have a new board of trustees and executive staff in the fall, the Ambassador learned during a meeting July 5 with Mohammad Habroush al-Suwaidi, a close adviser of the Abu Dhabi ruling family. The decision, coming after months of engagement by the Ambassador at senior levels of the UAEG, should put this issue to rest. END SUMMARY.

13. (C) The Ambassador met July 5 with Mohammad Habroush al-Suwaidi, who is chairman of the National Bank of Abu Dhabi, a member of the Abu Dhabi Executive Council and Supreme Petroleum Council, and a close confidant of the Abu Dhabi ruling family and plays the role of advisor to the Crown Prince, Shaykh Khalifa. Over the past two years, the Ambassador has developed a good working relationship with Habroush who maintains a very low public profile. In the meeting, the Ambassador explained the USG view on the ZCCF, just as she has done in previous meetings with Abu Dhabi's senior leadership over the past nine months. Habroush told the Ambassador that both he and Abu Dhabi Crown Prince Sheikh Khalifa were very concerned by the negative press that the ZCCF was receiving, and agreed "100 percent" with the USG position that the Center is no longer promoting President Zayid's philosophies, including a message of tolerance, understanding, and a pro-American policy. Habroush added that Sh. Khalifa appointed him as his emissary to meet one-on-one with his half-brother the Center's patron, Deputy Prime Minister Sultan bin Zayid, Shaykh Zayid's second eldest son.

14. (C) In their one-on-one meeting, Sultan was reportedly cooperative and said he never meant any harm to his father. He conceded that some of the speakers and activities at the Center had tarnished his father's reputation and were not in keeping with his father's policies and ideology. Sultan further agreed that all of the Center's public activities should cease for the summer, and that the executive staff was in need of an overhaul. In addition, to ensure better oversight, the Center will get a new board of trustees this fall. MFA Minstate Hamdan bin Zayid, in a telcon with the Ambassador July 6, confirmed the steps Habroush outlined. The Ambassador has repeatedly engaged the senior UAEG leadership on the need to make substantive changes at the Center, a "think tank" that has sponsored a series of offensive lectures, released publications containing noxious material about Judaism, and allowed anti-semitic language on its website.

15. (C) Habroush assured the Ambassador that the Center will no longer tolerate anti-American, anti-semitic, or other offensive messages. (Note: There was no discussion of the Center's website, but we assume that it will be cleaned up as well. End note.) Although there had been talk of changing the Center's name to remove any reference to Shaykh Zayid, Sultan's willingness to do the needful with regard to staffing, activities and programs is sufficient, Habroush said.

16. (U) The Ambassador told Habroush that she would convey these positive developments to Washington. The Embassy has seen US press reports citing Harvard President Lawrence Summers saying he will decide in the next two weeks whether to accept a gift from Shaykh Zayid to establish a chair for Islamic Religious Studies. When queried this spring by the Divinity School's Dean, we told Harvard that while the ZCCF is funded by the UAEG, it does not necessarily reflect the views of the UAEG or Shaykh Zayed personally. Harvard isn't the only educational institution with questions about Shaykh Zayid's generosity. We have seen US press reports about a new controversy involving a \$15,000 donation by Shaykh Zayid to the Las Flores Elementary School in southern California. The school reportedly needs the funds to save teachers' jobs. The School Superintendent has asked Rep. Christopher Cox of Newport Beach for help in researching Shaykh Zayid's "background" before deciding whether the school can keep his money.

17. (C) COMMENT: In the end, credit goes to Khalifa, Shaykh Zayid's eldest son, for acting decisively by engaging one-on-one with his younger half-brother (albeit by deploying a close ally of Shaykh Zayid, perhaps to save the embarrassment entailed in a face-to-face consultation). The Ambassador's senior interlocutors had cautioned that any move against Sultan by his younger half-brothers - de facto Defense Minister Muhammad bin Zayid and MFA Minstate Hamdan, would be viewed as an outright power play. END COMMENT.

18. (U) Biographic note: Habrourh is related to Ahmed bin Khalifa al-Suweidi, the UAEG's first foreign minister and an architect of UAE federation. He wields considerable political power behind the scenes through his close relationship with CP Khalifa and his membership on the Executive and Petroleum Councils of Abu Dhabi.
WAHBA